

SOUTH BEND, IND.
TRIBUNE

E - 120,288

S - 126,433

NOV 9 1975

Editorials:

George Bush and the CIA

President Ford was so anxious to put in one of "my guys" as head of the Central Intelligence Agency that he seems to have overlooked the need to remove that sullied agency from the slightest tinge of partisan politics.

As a result, the nomination of George Bush to direct the CIA is in trouble. A heavy confirmation fight in the Senate appears to be in the making, in which the administration will be on the defensive.

Bush is a man of proven ability and wide experience. But he is a politician by trade. The disclosures that the CIA was used for domestic political purposes by Presidents Johnson and Nixon, and the prospect of more disclosures in the forthcoming Senate committee report, make him vulnerable to charges that under him the CIA might be "politicized" again.

These claims already are being made by prominent Democrats in the Senate. Perhaps they are unfair; certainly they are heavily laced with partisan maneuvering for 1976 campaign advantage. However, sufficient validity exists in them to give the critics a basis for opposition.

Bush was chairman of the Republican National Committee before being appointed to his most recent post as U.S. envoy to the People's Republic of China. That, plus the fact that Mr. Ford unwisely refused to count Bush out as a possible candidate for vice-president in 1976, gives him a political cast.

Hypocrisy fills the air, of course, when politicians attack a man for being a politician. They act as though this occupation

makes them statesmen, while the same occupation makes their target a potential villain.

The fact remains that appointment of a highly competent technician with no significant partisan affiliations to head the CIA would have been a much sounder move, both from the immediate challenge of getting him confirmed and the longer range need to rebuild public confidence in the intelligence agency.

Under Clarence Kelley, a former non-political police chief, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is regaining the respect of the public. The FBI fell into disrepute during the Watergate crisis as revelations were made about the way Nixon used it improperly for his personal purposes.

A similar redemption is needed for the CIA.

Mr. Ford already seems to be copping his bet on Bush a little. Immediately after his announcement that he had fired William E. Colby from the CIA directorship, Colby appeared about to leave the office almost immediately. Complaints came from the Senate that his departure would handicap the Senate committee's investigation, in which Colby has been cooperating quite helpfully. Most, if not all, the CIA's misdeeds occurred before he became the agency's director.

Mr. Ford then announced that Colby would stay on at the CIA with full power until Bush is confirmed. That could be months from now, and possibly not at all. Bush and the President face a strenuous selling task to convince the Senate and the nation that he is the right man for the job.